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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
God is still speaking, y'all

Reminder about Special Called Meeting: Thursday, 10/27

Text of the Resolution is below and also [on our website](#).

The Southeast Conference UCC Board of Directors has called a special meeting of the Southeast Conference on Thursday, October 27, 2022 at 7:30 PM Eastern Time/ 6:30 PM Central Time. [The meeting will be held virtually on Zoom, with a link that will be provided upon registration. You can register here.](#)

The sole purpose of this meeting is to discuss and vote upon an urgent matter regarding the 34th General Synod of the United Church of Christ to be held June 30 – July 4, 2023, online and onsite in Indianapolis, IN. The Conference will vote on the sponsorship of a resolution to be submitted to the 34 General Synod regarding the injustices and harm directed at people who are of transgender and non-binary experience. This will be the only item on the agenda for consideration.

The quorum for this special meeting aligns with the quorum for all meetings of the full Conference. Our Constitution and By-laws require Seventy-five (75) voting delegates (includes elected/appointed delegates of each congregation and all authorized clergy), with one-third (1/3) of the congregations represented, or 19 congregations.

Yours In Christ,
Rev. Dr. Myrtle Johnson, Acting Moderator
Rev. Kim Wood, Conference Minister

ACTIVELY AFFIRMING THE HUMAN DIGNITY OF TRANSGENDER AND NONBINARY PERSONS

A Resolution of Witness

SUMMARY

For several decades, political and theological conversations related to LGBTQ+ issues have centered around same-sex relationships for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Even as those conversations have led to significant gains for human and civil rights for LGBTQ+ people, the volume of faith resources dedicated to LGBTQ+ advocacy often have excluded reflection on the unique considerations related to gender identity. Some people have suggested that taking the Bible seriously requires people of faith to stand in opposition to the existence, health, and humanity of transgender and non-binary people. Consequently, gender-expansive people of all demographics and Christian traditions have been made to feel that they must choose between their faith and living a whole, healthy, and authentic life.

The United Church of Christ has staked its claim to be a diverse community of believers and belief. It is our diversity that creates our strength. This diversity calls us to a radical welcome and to widen the table of welcome to our transgender and non-binary siblings.

Transgender and non-binary people already are actively preaching, teaching, leading, pastoring, and offering their time, talent, treasure, and a variety of gifts for ministry and service in the United Church of Christ. The question is not if a person can be transgender, or non-binary, and Christian, but how might we as a Christian denomination advocate for and empower those whom God is already working through to enrich the whole life of the body of Christ.

PREVIOUS RESOLUTIONS

This resolution builds on the (only) two previous resolutions of witness that support people from the transgender and non-binary communities: 2003's resolution "Affirming the Participation and Ministry of Transgender People within the United Church of Christ and Supporting their Civil and Human Rights" and 2011's resolution "Supporting International Human Rights Related to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity." The sharp rise in legislative assaults on the dignity and human rights of people who are transgender and non-binary in our country right now calls for an additional and even stronger response from those who affirm the dignity and rights of people from transgender and non-binary communities.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL RATIONALE

Foundational to our Christian faith is the belief that human beings are

created in God's image (Gen. 1:26) and, thus, are fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps. 139:14). At our baptisms, God claims us in love and tells us God is well-pleased with us (Mk 1:11). All other tenets of our faith grow out of a commitment to acknowledging and affirming the dignity of every human being.

Our Scriptures specifically affirm the dignity of people who are gender nonconforming, sometimes referred to as "eunuchs." In Isaiah, God gives to eunuchs who are faithful to God's covenant the profound gift of a name, never to be cut off (Is. 56:4-5). In the New Testament, Philip is sent by God to teach and baptize an Ethiopian eunuch. Now, someone who had been denied entrance to the Temple has received complete acceptance (Acts 8:26-40).

Finally, Paul's words to the Galatians that in Christ there is no longer male or female demonstrates that God's love and acceptance transcends human constructs of gender (Gal 3:28).

TEXT OF THE MOTION

WHEREAS the United Church of Christ has staked its claim to be an open and affirming denomination and has worked hard to maintain a radical welcome to the LGBTQ+ community in many of our churches; and

WHEREAS people of transgender and non-binary experience are beloved by God and are among the neighbors Jesus commanded his followers to love and treat with worth and dignity; and

WHEREAS every human being is created in the image of God and is due respect for their human dignity; and

WHEREAS the human dignity and human rights of transgender and non-binary people are being threatened in at least 30 states through legislation that denies access to life-saving health care, participation in sports, and utilization of gender appropriate bathrooms; and

WHEREAS gender dysphoria is a serious medical condition that, if left untreated, can result in severe anxiety and depression, self-harm, and suicidality; and

WHEREAS when appropriately treated, gender dysphoria is easily managed by following appropriate treatment protocols to affirm their gender identity and alleviate distress; and

WHEREAS compassionate parents and medical teams are, in some states, being legally punished for offering, providing, and extending life-saving healthcare to trans and nonbinary youth and adults; and

WHEREAS decisions about gender-affirming medical care must be made between a provider, patient, and the patient's parents or guardians; and

WHEREAS trans and nonbinary youth and adults face a higher rate of death by suicide than their peers and are more vulnerable to violence and death, specifically and disproportionately transgender women of color; and

WHEREAS a GLSEN survey shows that more than 80% of "gender expansive" students have been harassed and a third feel unsafe in classrooms; and

WHEREAS research shows that it can be extremely harmful for a transgender person to be excluded from a sports team consistent with their gender identity; and

WHEREAS in a country where transgender people have no federal protections they face massive discrimination and attacks, civil rights must be spelled out and protected; and

WHEREAS public discourse perpetuating the myth of the gender binary causes great harm when used as the rationale for discrimination and punitive legislation; and

WHEREAS efforts of allies sometimes fail to provide the support intended for our transgender and non-binary siblings, including UCC Open and Affirming congregations;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls on the United Church of Christ in all of its settings to create educational curricula and informational opportunities to learn how to affirm and inform congregations, communities, policy-makers and activists to develop gender-affirming space and inclusion in all aspects of the United Church of Christ; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages all settings to promote full equality at every level of law that protects the rights of our transgender and gender non-conforming siblings; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ re-affirm our commitment to lift our religious text and stand in solidarity with our transgender and gender non-conforming siblings against the harm done, often through the use of religious language.

FUNDING

Funding the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities with the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

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